



In remembrance of Romano Biancoli from the Societa' Italiana di Psicoanalisi della Relazione (SIPRe)

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The memory of Romano Biancoli takes us back to the last decades of the 20th century. This was a very productive time for Italian psychoanalysis, which opened its conservative frontiers to innovation. Such a change in direction is hard to imagine if one did not witness it in person. We all started following our natural inclination and this brought us to read in depth those authors we felt closer to. This is when Romano instinctively turned to Fromm. To him, studying Fromm's works and making them known to the wider public became a passion, shaping his life and giving it a deeper meaning.

Biancoli and Fromm were both radical humanists. They shared a deeply ethical view of society and they also refused to resort to intellectualism when treating patients. Radical humanism sees mankind as the origin of everything and is based on the belief that there is a human nature characteristic of the human species, common to all mankind, aimed at activity and inner vitality in the perspective of a never-ending becoming.

The typical Frommian idea of the predominance of being over having (Fromm, 1976) gave rise to Fromm's ethical view of society. If we follow this line of thought, all that is human has value in itself and is worth taking into consideration ("Nihil humani a me alienum puto", Terence). Each individual can, as a member of mankind, potentially feel all human experiences.

Fromm rejected any dogma, ritualized procedure, or a priori theory which denies the uniqueness and complexity of the individual pa-

tient and violates the potential for a unique vital encounter. Contemporary Western societies are seen as characterized both by the generalization of market relations between people and by the impressive development of technologies, especially of computer technology, which has given rise to an unconscious "cybernetic religion" (Fromm, 1976). "Cybernetic man" thinks but does not feel. The most striking trait in him is the split between thought, affect and will (Fromm, 1973). Intellect is increasingly dissociated from feelings and emotions. People believe they are feeling whereas they are in fact thinking about a feeling, they believe they are moved whereas they are in fact thinking of an emotion.

Biancoli's profoundly ethical vision of the world led him to found the Istituto Fromm in Bologna and to strive to have it recognized. He thought that those principles which he shared with Fromm could best be applied in psychoanalysis, in the meeting of two people looking for the fullness of life.

Some of his visions and statements are still very topical. Here is an extract from *Erich Fromm's Psychoanalytic Technique*, a seminar he gave at the Department of Psychology of the University of Bologna on November 27, 1997.

"Psychoanalysis is an art which leads to a global consciousness concerning understanding, feeling and acting. Indeed, knowledge as experience is not limited to intellect but concerns a person's totality. To become aware of a formerly unconscious content is a spontaneous, complete and immediate discovery. Psycho-



analysis is an art, because it is applied to what is living. Moreover, this transformation only becomes real if its movement continues in the sphere of action and is made real by "doing" (Fromm, 1957). This new awareness cannot help being translated into facts and behaviours. The leap into action involves choices which require giving up former advantages and imply tasting new freedom. Analysis is a dialogue between analyst and analysand aimed at finding out who the latter is and why he/she is that way. The dialogue is based on reciprocally communicated responses and emotional reactions. The analyst reacts emotionally and expresses his/her own reaction to what the analysand expresses. The analyst not only feels the patient, but also him/herself, thanks to the inner activity of finding one's own humanity in the other and of experiencing the human universal in oneself and in others. Therefore, as stated by Groddeck, the patient is indeed the analyst's teacher and therapist. The analyst's unconscious resonates with the patient's, and the analyst thus deepens his/her own personal analysis."

Another very important characteristic in Biancoli was his secular approach, a mark of his ethical thought. What follows is an extract from *Dialogue Experiences 2008*, a seminar held at the "Università per la Formazione Permanente dell'Adulto "G. Bosi Marmotti" in Ravenna.

"Secularity is the inner freedom we achieve

from patterns, ties and prejudices by getting rid of false idols and letting ourselves go to the game of symbols. This inner state of mind does not prevent us from having ideas, fighting or taking sides. It is not an oxymoron, but an attempt to be critical when making choices or when following our heart."

There is also another aspect of Roberto Biancoli we would like to remember: his being happy and always good-humoured when amongst friends, where he was always witty and lively. We will not forget him thanks to many pleasant episodes we experienced together with him during many IFPS meetings. In Madrid, our local colleague took us to a tavern where they had placed a big dish full of shellfish on a wooden table and we all helped ourselves with our hands in spite of etiquette. In New York, after the Alitalia airline lost his luggage, Romano was compelled to buy an unlikely suit with golden buttons in Brooklyn so he would have something to put on to deliver his speech. In Oslo, where we had dinner at a very smart restaurant – not to mention the bill afterwards – he started to tackle with knife and fork a huge unknown pale Northern Sea fish in his plate, however served with a very refined Italian red wine, Amarone.

These are the last happy images of Romano Biancoli with which we would like to end our recollection.